

October Feature Article

How Many Melodies?

By Larry Sakayama

The song critiques at our meetings generally dwell more on lyrics than melody, but in the last few months I've noticed comments and suggestions on melodic movement. This is good. A song requires both.

So many songs have been written that it seems hard to write an original melody. Sometimes I feel like I'm recycling my own melodies (maybe they're not my own). So how many unique melodies are there? Apparently, a lot. Here's my analysis.

To keep things simple, I've restricted the melody like this:

- Use major-scale tones only
- Bound the range within one octave (8 tones)
- The melody will be 8 notes in sequence, in quarter

note timing (1 note per beat). This is two measures in 4/4 timing.

Within these bounds, we have 8 notes to choose from to start the melody. We have these same notes to pick from for each of the other 7 notes in our melody.

In an 8-note melody with 8 choices for each note we have $8^8 = 16,777,216$ possibilities. (In a two-note melody, we have $8^2 = 8 \times 8 = 64$ possibilities.) To be fair, there are duplicate melodies in there – for example, a melody consisting of a single note played 8 times is the same melody regardless of the note you use. There are 8 identical melodies consisting of a single note. There are other duplications, but for now let's say there are about 16 million 8-note melodies.

If we allow one of the quarter notes to be replaced by 2 notes (eighth notes) we get $8^9 =$ over 134 million possible melodies. (This is 8 choices for tones with 9 notes in the sequence.)

The next meeting of the SVSA will be held **Wednesday, October 22** at Third Street Coffeehouse in Roanoke, Virginia. Doors will open at 7 p.m.; the meeting begins promptly at 7:30 and will last until the last song critique is finished, or 10:30 p.m., whichever comes first. Members may submit one song for critique (on cassette or CD, or you can perform it live) and should provide at least 12 copies of the lyrics. Critiques are limited to members only but non-members and guests are encouraged to sit in on the discussions and exercises.

If we further relax our restrictions to include a single non-scale tone or go one note beyond an octave in the scale, we have a nine-note sequence with nine notes to choose from giving us $9^9 =$ over 387 million possibilities.

You get the idea. Even with severe restrictions there are a ton of melodic possibilities. When you add other timing possibilities, increased range, longer sequences, and non-scale tones, the numbers rise astronomically.

So I guess there's still some room for original melodies.

The "Song Form" Challenge

(for critiques at the SVSA meeting on Feb 25, 2015)

Here's the challenge: Write a song with 5 or 6 sections where no section repeats, either musically or lyrically. Bring it to our February 2015 meeting where we'll critique them. Can you make the transitions seamless so that it doesn't sound like 4 songs smashed together?

Although most commercial songs follow a common song format, occasionally a song ignores the norms and becomes a hit. Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" is an example (see below). There are six sections, all musically and lyrically different.

You can hear it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPqZs7Vl_xg

"In Dreams" (Roy Orbison)

Intro

A candy-colored clown they call 'The Sandman'
Tiptoes to my room every night
Just to sprinkle stardust and to whisper
"Go to sleep. Everything is all right."

A

I close my eyes, then I drift away
Into the magic night. I softly say
A silent prayer like dreamers do.
Then I fall asleep to dream my dreams of
you.

B

In dreams I walk with you. In dreams I talk
to you.
In dreams you're mine. All of the time we're
together
In dreams, In dreams.

C

But just before the dawn, I awake and find
you gone.

D

I can't help it, I can't help it, if I cry.
I remember that you said goodbye.

E

It's too bad that all these things
Can only happen in my dreams
Only in dreams In beautiful dreams.

Article recommendation: "Streaming is the Future. Spotify is Not. Let's Talk Solutions"

SVSA member Mike Franke recommends an article on music streaming that he found on a website called The Trichordist (www.thetrichordist.com). The article discusses the way music-streaming services work (specifically Spotify) and discusses why that model doesn't work and what might work. Since SVSA doesn't have permission to reprint the article, here is the URL -- if you're interested, go and check it out!

<http://thetrichordist.com/2014/10/14/streaming-is-the-future-spotify-is-not-lets-talk-solutions/>

DSA Lyric Contest deadlines reminder

Here's a reminder that the deadline for entries in the Dallas Songwriters Association lyrics contest is Friday, October 31. You can find out details at the contest's website, <http://www.dsalyriccontest.blogspot.com/>.

President's Message - October, 2104

End of October means that it's almost November. And that means we'll be electing a new board next month. Think about nominating someone or throwing your hat in. Our current board has been in place for a number of years and some new blood will be good for us. [Editor's note: If anyone is interested in taking over the newsletter, please step up and say so! I will be happy to turn it over to someone else. On the other hand, if nobody else wants it, I will be happy to continue to do it. -- K.A.]

Reserve **Saturday, December 13, 2014** for our Holiday Dinner and Song Circle. It will be at Mickey Nelson's place, Antique Blue, 12 Campbell Ave. in downtown Roanoke. Dinner will be catered by RT Smiths. Cost TBD. More information will follow shortly. Reservations will be required.

Check out our "Song Form Challenge." We'll be doing the critiques for these songs at our meeting in Feb 2015.

Hope to see you our meeting on October 22.

- Larry Sakayama

SVSA Meeting Notes

At last month's regular SVSA meeting, a total of 19 SVSA members were in attendance and we welcomed one guest.

At the September meeting, SVSA President Larry Sakayama continued our "mini-workshop" series with an informative talk on "Song Form And Structure" based upon some examples of Roy Orbison's songwriting. Larry issued a challenge to SVSA members: Write a song, by February's meeting, with five or six sections where no section repeats either musically or lyrically. Larry noted that the real challenge will be to make the transitions seamless so that the final result won't sound like four songs smashed together. Larry's presentation generated a lively discussion and contained helpful information of use to everyone.

The September meeting also saw 11 original songs and one lyric reading given the SVSA "treatment" in our regular critique session — an open discussion of each song with comments, opinions, suggestions, and observations aplenty. From simple guitar/vocal demos to professionally produced studio recordings, original songs submitted for critique get a thorough and non-biased listen from our membership. Critiques cover lyrics and music; perhaps the most important observations deal with whether or not the song melds the two elements into a successful whole. It's a proven fact: A song comes out stronger when it has gone through the "wringer" at an SVSA meeting.

And, as always, the pre- and post-critique discussions were lively, and a lot of interesting and helpful information passed around the room. The exchange of information, opinions, and ideas is at the heart of what makes the monthly SVSA meetings so worthwhile and interesting. If you haven't been to a meeting lately, plan to make time and bring in a song for critique ... we're always ready and willing to let you know what we think! Or just stop by and join in the discussions. Your two cents is always welcome!

Non-members are encouraged to attend as well. You can sit through a meeting or two and see for yourself whether or not you think the SVSA would be beneficial to your songwriting efforts. The pay-off might not be immediate -- but the long-run benefits are many and valuable. You'll find SVSA members with nearly every level of experience who are willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you on your songwriting journey. So plan to attend next month's meeting and check us out!

- David Simpkins

SVSA Performing Members' Upcoming Gigs

David Simpkins

Saturday, November 8, Our Daily Bread,
Blacksburg, Virginia, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Friday, December 5, Trinity Ecumenical
Parish, Moneta, Virginia, 7-9:00 p.m.,
SVSA Songwriters Showcase with five
more participants to be named

Saturday, December 6, Floyd Country
Store -- Americana Afternoons, Floyd,
Virginia, noon-3:00 p.m. (In the round
with Mike Pearrell, Greg Traidlo, and
Ron Ireland. With Kathy Acosta and
Britt Mistele.)

Barbara Martin

Tuesday, November 11, 6-8 pm, Inside
Songwriting: The Art, Craft and Fun of
It with Barbara Martin & Greg Traidlo,
Roanoke Public Library, Main Branch,
706 S Jefferson St, Roanoke, VA. Free.

Wednesday, November 12, 12-1pm,
Music at the Library, Barbara solo,
Waynesboro Public Library, 600 S.
Wayne Avenue, Waynesboro, VA. Free.

Acoustic Reset

(Jerry Gilmore & David Bowen)

November 8, Bent Mountain Community
Center (with G4Vet students), 6:30-
8:00 p.m.

November 11, Ronald McDonald House,
Roanoke, 7- 8:30 p.m.

November 15th, Americana Afternoon,
Floyd, Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Greg Traidlo

Nov. 11, Songwriting workshop with
Barbara Martin, Roanoke Main Public
Library.

Nov. 28, Two-Way Street Coffeehouse.
Downers Grove II with Dean Milano
and Tommy Re.

Dec. 5, Smith Mt. Lake Arts Council with
other songwriters TBA

Dec. 6, Americana Afternoons at Floyd
General Store Floyd , VA

Marc Baskind

Thu. Oct. 23: Inn at VA Tech, Blacksburg
VA, Continental Divide Lounge, Solo,
4:30-6:30PM

Sat. Oct. 25: Our Daily Bread,
Brambleton Rd, Roanoke VA,
9:30AM-12:00PM

Sat. Oct. 25: Annie Moore's Irish Pub,
Electric Rd, Roanoke VA, w/Caravan,
7:30-10:30PM

Sun Oct. 26: Inn at VA Tech, Blacksburg
VA, Preston's Restaurant Brunch,
Solo, 1AM-1:30PM

Sat. Nov. 1: LeoGrande Vinyards,
Goode VA, Solo, 2-6PM

Sat. Nov. 1: Big Lick Tropical Grill,
Lynchburg VA, w/Grooveline, 8-11PM

Sat. Nov. 29: Annie Moore's Irish Pub,
Electric Rd, Roanoke VA, w/Caravan,
7:30-10:30PM

SVSA Classifieds

FOR SALE

1991 Martin HD-28p guitar. Solid Sitka Spruce top, solid East Indian back and sides. 1 11/16 nut width and 25.4 inch scale. The HD-28 comes with a Herringbone binding on top, and scalloped bracing under the top. The P stands for a low profile neck design. It has an Ebony bridge and fret board, with pearl dot fret markers. Comes with a \$200 L.R. Baggs Lyric pick-up system and a Martin HSC. 9.2 out of 10 condition. \$1800. Call **Britt** at 540-745-6771.

FOR SALE

KORG CR4 4-track Recorder. Used once. Easy to use, great for songwriting! \$175. Contact **Dan Hildebrand**, (540) 765-9104 or danhildebrand@hughes.net.

DEMO RECORDING AND PRODUCTION

The Shop in Fincastle, Virginia. Clean, high-quality multitrack recording and mixdown with an all-digital recording system. I can make MP3s and CDs from the mix. I'm a capable session player and can add guitars, keyboards, bass and percussion, as well as arranging and sweetening. \$25/ hour for SVSA members. Contact **Josh Jones**, thejonesgroup@rbnet.com, (540) 473-3598.

AUDIO RECORDING, GUITAR LESSONS, MUSIC VIDEOS

Randolph Walker Music. randolphwalker@cox.net
www.randolphwalker.com
(540) 588-5826

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. All classifieds must be music-related.

Upcoming at Third Street Coffeehouse

October 24

Bob Schmucker and Jim Page

October 31

The Panini Brothers

November 7

Clinton Collins

November 14

The McKenzies

November 21

Jane Gabrielle

November 28

Closed for Thanksgiving

December 5

Steve and LaWanda Langston

December 12

Lee Robertson and Katy Davidson

December 19

Dogwood Tales

December 26

Closed for Christmas

January 2

Closed for New Year's

Jan 9

Chris Shepard (Roanoke, VA)

Jan 16

SVSA Writers in the Round

Jan 23

TBA

Jan 30

TBA

Feb 6

TBA

Third Street Coffeehouse is open every Friday. Sign up for open mic 7-7:30; open mic performances 7:30-8:15; featured performer from 8:30-10. Third Street is a smoke-free, alcohol-free, no-cover-charge venue.

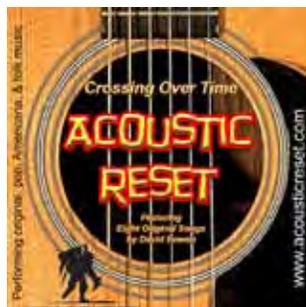
SVSA Members' Recordings



eyes on the horizon



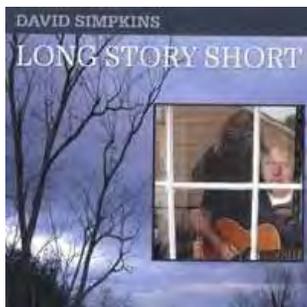
kaleidoscope



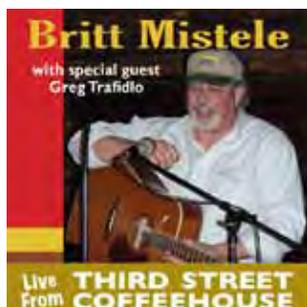
crossing over time



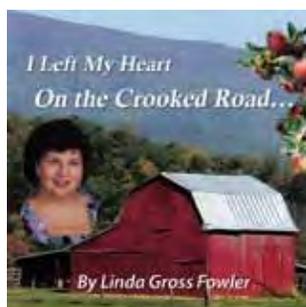
marc with a "c"



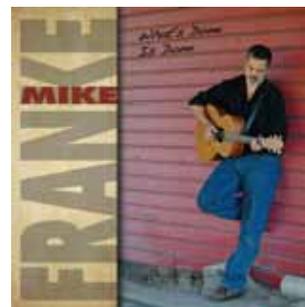
long story short



live from third street
coffeehouse



i left my heart on the
crooked road



what's done is done

Barbara Martin

EYES ON THE HORIZON — Jazz and all originals with Robert Redd on piano, Chuck Redd on drums and vibes, Steve Wolf on bass, Mac Walter on guitar, Bruce Swaim on saxophone, John Jensen on trombone, and Matt Finley on flugelhorn.

KALEIDOSCOPE — Barbara's jazziest CD. All original songs, with co-writes with Joel Evans, Mac Walter, and Greg Traftidlo.

David Bowen (Acoustic Reset)

CROSSING OVER TIME — Featuring folk-pop tunes. Eight originals and eight covers accented by solid guitar licks and accompanying instruments. Available at acousticreset.com.

Marc Baskind

MARC WITH A "C" — Sampler CD of covers and original songs offers a taste of the varied styles of this accomplished guitarist/singer.

David Simpkins

LONG STORY SHORT — Offers 12 original Americana tunes blending rock, folk, blues, and country.

Britt Mistele

LIVE FROM THIRD STREET COFFEEHOUSE — Four original songs and 11 covers, recorded live at Roanoke's Third Street Coffeehouse. With special guest Greg Traftidlo..

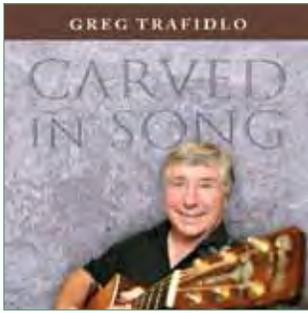
Linda Fowler

I LEFT MY HEART ON THE CROOKED ROAD — Features 12 original compositions.

Mike Franke

WHAT'S DONE IS DONE — A debut release of 14 original folk and blues tunes about everyday life and interesting people featuring Mike's fingerstyle and slide guitar.

SVSA Members' Recordings



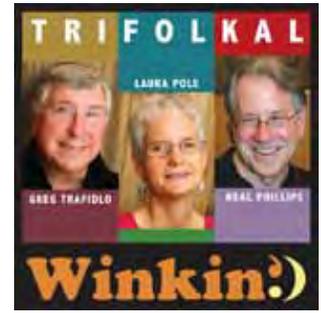
carved in song



pacing the moon



dog joggin'



winkin'



cup of contradictions



dimestore detective



eastern western
cowgirl



from the heart of a
cowgirl

Greg Trafidlo

CARVED IN SONG — Most songs co-written with some of Greg's favorite songwriters. Listen to audio clips at gregtrafidlo.com.

FOLKSINGULAR — Greg's third solo CD reflects the diversity of his songwriting and production skills. With SVSA-ers on background vocals, and Marc Baskind on guitar and vocals.

Josh Jones

PACING THE MOON — Thirteen of the strongest songs Josh has written. For lyrics, short audio clips and additional information, please visit www.jonesgroupmusic.com.

Steve Clark

DOG JOGGIN' — Eleven sweet and true amusing tunes comprise this quirky singer/songwriter CD. Available at cdbaby.com.

Trifolkal

WINKIN' — Newest release from that "trio fiercely dedicated to fun" tempers the fun with poignancy and heart.

Mike Pearrell

CUP OF CONTRADICTIONS — 13 original songs. Lots of SVSA musicians singing and playing.

DIMESTORE DETECTIVE — Mike's first solo CD features 14 original songs. Produced by Greg Trafidlo; with a number of guest SVSA musicians. Available at Mike's shows.

Aspen Black

EASTERN WESTERN COWGIRL — Eight original Contemporary Western songs. Available at CDBaby.com/aspenblack7.

FROM THE HEART OF A COWGIRL — Original spoken word poems adhering to the Western Music Association guidelines for the cowboy poetry genre.

HORSEGIRL POET — Songs and poems about horses, cowboys, and rural life.

A HUNDRED YEARS TOO LATE — All original music for horse lovers and those who yearn to preserve the spirit and lands of the last American frontier.

About Classifieds:

SVSA Music News free classifieds may be submitted by paid members only. All classifieds must be music-related. Members, e-mail your classifieds to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

About articles and other written contributions:

SVSA members write feature articles for the SVSA Music News throughout the year. Members can submit other articles and features at any time. Non-members may also submit articles and other written contributions but their inclusion will be subject to time and space constraints. All articles may be edited for space considerations and will be edited, as time allows, for spelling and grammar. E-mail submissions to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com.

About Announcements:

SVSA members may list music-related announcements in the SVSA Music News. E-mail them to svsa.songwriters@gmail.com by the second Tuesday of the month. Announcements from members will be e-mailed to members as soon as they are received and, if still timely, published in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News. Announcements from non-members will be held for publication in an upcoming issue of the SVSA Music News.

About Members' Gig Listings:

SVSA members may submit their upcoming performance schedules for publication in the SVSA Music News. The submissions will be printed as submitted; the more information you provide, the more likely the response.

SVSA DISCLAIMER

The ideas and opinions contained in this newsletter are intended to be helpful to songwriters. The companies and organizations mentioned are believed to be legitimate; however, SVSA does not endorse any products or services and offers no guaranteed success based on the content.

We are always looking for articles about SVSA members and articles of interest to the songwriting community. Send articles and information to the Editor, Kathy Acosta, or svsa.songwriters@gmail.com. SVSA is a non-profit organization.

SVSA Board Members:

Larry Sakayama – President
Mike DeGiorgi - Vice President
David Simpkins – Secretary
Greg Trafidlo – Treasurer
Mike Franke - Board Member
Britt Mistele - Board Member
Kathy Acosta - Newsletter Editor



SVSA
P.O. Box 698
Salem, VA 24153
www.svsasongs.com

Seen on the Musical Scene

photos of music performances in Southwest Virginia



In concert at The Lyric Theater in Blacksburg on September 24 was Scythian, a Celtic group that includes two Ukrainian members and plays some Slavic-style numbers.

Photos by Leigh Littleton.





Toronto band New Country Rehab at The Harvester in Rocky Mount on October 4. Photos by Leigh Littleton.





The Duhks (from Winnipeg) at The Harvester in Rocky Mount on October 4.
Photos by Leigh Littleton.

